PIONEER WOMAN DOCTOR

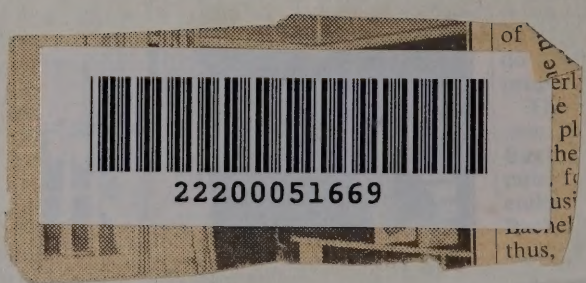
MRS. GARRETT ANDERSON

ELIZABETH GARRETT ANDERSON. By LOUISE GARRETT ANDERSON. Faber and Faber. 10s. 6d.

This life of Elizabeth Garrett Anderson by her daughter gives not only a picture of a remarkable woman and her struggle for education and achievements as a pioneer woman doctor but also a remarkable picture of Victorian life. Born just one year before Queen Victoria came to the Throne, of an unusually liberal-minded family, Elizabeth Garrett owed much of her early inspiration to Emily Davies, whose work for women's education is too well known to need comment; at first the Garrett family were shocked at their daughter's wild ambition to become a doctor, but once she had won over her father he became her greatest friend and backer in her almost impossible fight to gain medical education and qualification.

The descriptions of her attendance at Middlesex Hospital, where she received some kindness but no status, her unhappy sessions at the London Hospital, and her work at St. Andrews, seem almost incredible nowadays, but not so incredible as the unwillingness of any examining body to admit a woman. However, threat of legal action forced the Society of Apothecaries to allow her to sit for their examination, and she qualified as L.S.A., which allowed her to practise. This step, however, blazed no trail for other women, since the society immediately altered its constitution to bar women in future. Practice, the founding of the St. Mary's Dispensary, a post at the Shadwell Hospital for Children, and work on the London School Board followed; but before she could become an M.D. she had to take examinations in Paris, setting out on the difficult curriculum with only a slight knowledge of French.

The work of Miss Jex-Blake and Mrs. Garrett Anderson's part in the London School of Medicine make an inspiring story of endeavour and endurance. We are told little of Mrs. Garrett Anderson's private life, although her marriage was very happy and her devotion to her children as complete as her other activities; indeed, she seems to have had very little private life at all, letting herself be swallowed up in her medical and social work, although she never neglected the human side of life. This is a story of extraordinary courage and strength of purpose, a most encouraging counterblast to those who say pessimistically that conditions to-day are no better than they ever were. If only for its account of the improved status of women, quite apart from the thrilling personal story, this book has a tonic quality.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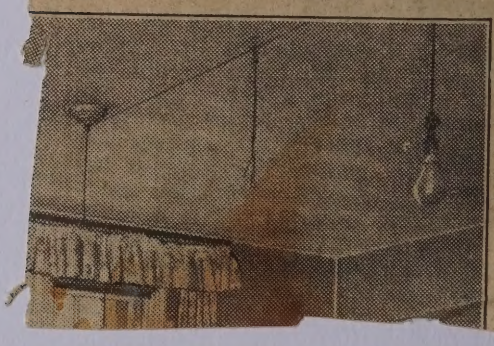

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